

To: Members of the General Assembly of the State of Iowa

From: Dr. Jane Bradley, Vice President, Hawkeye Community College, Waterloo, Iowa
Kathy Flynn, Vice President, Hawkeye Community College, Waterloo, Iowa

Re: Senate File 424, Chapter 91, District-to-Community College Program/Facilities Sharing Pilot Program Summary Report

Background

Hawkeye Community College (HCC) opened its Western Outreach facility in Holland, Iowa, in 2009. This facility provides classroom, office, and computer lab space as well as ICN/EBS capability. HCC provides full-time staffing for the center along with printing, internet access, and online training for faculty. The school districts provide qualified faculty to teach most of the college credit classes offered. The College has offered a variety of credit classes including college-level courses to many high school students in that region. The school districts served by Hawkeye's Western Outreach Center include Aplington-Parkersburg Community School District, Dike-New Harford Community School District, Gladbrook-Reinbeck Community School District, and Grundy Center Community School District. These schools formed a partnership known as Cedar Valley West.

As part of the partnership arrangement, Hawkeye agreed to pay the lease costs for the Center for the first two years. After that, the school districts would assume the lease payment obligation. Hawkeye's lease payment obligation ended June 30, 2011. In 2011, the school districts learned that they could not legally make lease payments on a facility outside their service area. That resulted in a request to the Legislature for a pilot project allowing the districts the option of using their PPEL funds outside school district boundaries. (Senate File 424, Chapter 91, District-to-Community College Program/Facilities Sharing Pilot Program) Without this legislative change, this partnership arrangement would have been threatened.

The Cedar Valley Consortium (CVC) began operation in the fall of 2011 as a result of Senate File 424 (Chapter 91, Section 1) which established a district-to-community college program and facilities sharing pilot program. The members of the consortium are Aplington-Parkersburg Community School District, Dike-New Harford Community School District,

Gladbrook-Reinbeck Community School District, Grundy Center Community School District and Hawkeye Community College. The CVC is now in its third year of existence.

This report will provide a summary of the consortium's efforts, the consortium's findings and conclusions relating to the operations of the consortium, information relating to measureable outcomes of student achievement and access to coursework within the consortium, and recommendations related to the continuation, modification, or expansion of the pilot program authorized in this section.

Executive Summary

The organization of the consortium has been highly beneficial to the school districts. Some districts have demonstrated dramatic growth in college credit offerings to their students. Gladbrook-Reinbeck Community School District grew from having only one student taking concurrent enrollment classes in the 2009 academic year to 29 students in the fall of 2013 and 24 registered for the spring of 2014. As a result of the consortium, the number of students taking college credits while in high school has reached an average of 110 students per term. The number of courses now available to these students has increased from 19 in 2011/2012 to 29 in the 2013/2014 academic year. This increase in courses offered provides more variety and depth to the curriculum the students are now able to access.

To achieve these gains in student enrollment and class offerings, the consortium members have shared resources including qualified teachers. The number of teachers being shared among the consortium members has grown from six in 2011/2012 to eight in 2013/2014. Along with sharing qualified teachers, the four K-12 public school districts have provided books and supplies for the college courses. Since HCC courses are web supported, each student needed access to a computer while away from the center so the districts provided each student with a computer at a cost of approximately \$1,000 each thus providing another way that students have benefitted from this arrangement. The superintendents of all of the school districts included in the consortium agree that students have benefitted tremendously from this arrangement.

There were challenges in the early stages of establishing the consortium. Each school district had distinct needs that impacted their ability to utilize physical plant and equipment levy (PPEL) funds in support of the consortium. For example, Aplington-Parkersburg incurred severe

tornado damage that required that these funds be dedicated to repairing and replacing their facilities. The use of district funds to support a project outside of the district was a foreign concept that was difficult to accept by some board members. One superintendent stated that those early conversations probably would have been different if they had known how successful the arrangement would be three years later. Another challenge impacting the use of PPEL funding was the leadership changes that occurred at three of the four school districts and at the community college resulting in the loss of some of the history, the vision and the concerns expressed about the implementation of the project. As a result, no PPEL funds were used to support the consortium in the first two years of its existence. However, all four school districts are using PPEL funds to support the consortium in its third year.

Recommendations

Considering the positive benefits and early success of the pilot project, consortium members recommend the following:

- The language in the legislation continue to state that participating school district boards “may” enter into joint contracts for the construction or lease of buildings. Each school board responded differently to the use of PPEL funds for this purpose and the availability of these funds for this purpose differed from one school district to another.
- Establish a funding stream dedicated specifically for the purpose of supporting a consortium such as the CVW. This would be beneficial since expenses to support the consortium would not be viewed as competition for other PPEL fund needs by the school boards.
- Expand the curriculum to include more career and technical coursework for students. This is proving to be challenging since Hawkeye’s Center is currently at capacity serving students with the current course offerings and the center operates at a deficit. The PPEL funds designated to the center by the school districts is not adequate to make up the current losses incurred by the college thus making further investment in an expansion of the facilities problematic.

Finally, Hawkeye Community College and its partners would like to sincerely thank all members of the Iowa General Assembly for allowing the consortium to create and implement this innovative pilot project.